

Covington County Health Department
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www.adph.org/covington/

Rabid raccoon in Carolina Community prompts heightened rabies warning

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Local public health officials are urging people to take basic, but extremely important, precautions in Covington County against rabies. The warning follows the confirmation of a positive raccoon that was found in the Carolina community on March 22, 2016. The main concern is that a rabid animal may come into contact with humans, their pets or livestock. Rabies is considered to be endemic in the raccoon population.

The following precautions should be taken to avoid possible exposure to rabies:

- Do not allow pets to run loose; confine them within a fenced-in area or with a leash.
- Do not leave out uneaten pet food or scraps around your house.
- Do not illegally feed or keep wildlife as pets.
- Do not go near wildlife or domestic animals that are acting in a strange or unusual manner.
- Instruct children not to go near any stray or wild animal regardless of its behavior.
- Advise children to tell an adult if they are bitten or scratched by an animal. Our area has experienced an increase in the number of bites by domestic animals in the past few months.

A person who is bitten or scratched by an animal should wash wounds immediately with mild soap and water, apply first aid, and seek medical attention or contact the county health department immediately. Rabies is preventable in humans following exposure if treatment is provided in a timely manner.

Alabama state law requires that all dogs, cats and ferrets 12 weeks of age and older must be kept current with rabies vaccination. Rabies vaccines are also available for horses and other livestock if recommended by a veterinarian. Vaccinating animals reduces the risk of rabies infection should an exposure occur, thus vaccination helps protect the animals, as well as their owners and caretakers.

For more information, log on to www.adph.org or contact the Alabama Department of Public Health, Bureau of Communicable Disease, Division of Epidemiology, at 1-800-338-8734 or the Covington County Health Department at (334) 222-1175.